

## **WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Monthly Report**

**April 2005**

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Welcome to the first issue of the WSDOT Public Transportation and Rail Monthly Report. To keep you informed on our activities, this monthly report will highlight progress and milestones reached in these areas:

- Public Transportation
  - Sound Transit/WSDOT Projects
  - Passenger and Freight Rail
  - Commute Trip Reduction/Transportation Demand Management
  - Current Issues and Upcoming Events
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### **Columbia County Forms State's 28th Transit System**

On February 7, 2005, the Columbia County Board of Commissioners voted unanimously to establish a county transit authority making Columbia County Public Transportation (CCPT) Washington State's 28th official transit system.

CCPT has been providing service in Columbia County for approximately eight years by relying on Medicaid contracts and WSDOT's public transportation grants. During the 2003-2005 biennium, WSDOT awarded CCPT \$380,000 in rural mobility grants to purchase a minibus and provide operating assistance for demand response and general public transportation. By becoming an official transit system, CCPT is now eligible to participate in the state's vanpool grants program and, with voter approval, can levy a local sales tax to attain stable funding.



### **2003-2005 Public Transportation Grants Awarded for 25 More Projects**

WSDOT was able to award \$246,614 for 25 new projects using a small amount of previously awarded public transportation grant funds that would not otherwise be spent by the end of the biennium. The grants are matching \$91,749 in local funds to provide a wide variety of projects that can be completed by June 30, 2005. Examples of projects include:

- Operating funding for special needs and general public transportation
- New bus shelters and solar powered lighting for bus stops
- Dispatching and scheduling software and computers
- Replacement wheelchair equipment
- Radios and communications equipment for vehicles

Current public transportation grantees competed for the excess funds and submitted over \$700,000 in requests.

### **2005-2007 Public Transportation Grant Applications Under Review**

The grant application and award process is underway for July 1, 2005-June 30, 2007 competitive public transportation grants. WSDOT staff and evaluation teams reviewed applications for 139 projects totaling over \$41 million in requests for operating, capital, and project development funds provided through state and federal programs. Evaluation teams scored the applications based on the need for the project and service provided, the applicant's ability to manage the project, and the project's benefit to the community. WSDOT will notify applicants of project

priorities in early April and anticipates awarding the competitive public transportation grants in June, after state and federal budgets are approved.

### **ACCT Published Biennial Report to the Legislature**

The Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT) published their *2003-2004 Report to the Washington State Legislature*. The report:

- Provides an overview of ACCT's mission and goals, membership, and budget
- Summarizes the progress made in promoting coordination and improving transportation access for people with special needs
- Describes demonstration projects and coordination successes



To get a copy of the report, call WSDOT's Public Transportation and Rail division at (360) 705-7846 or visit the ACCT Web site at: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/acct/ACCT\\_publications.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/acct/ACCT_publications.htm)

### **WSDOT Provided Training for Asset Management Program**

In March, WSDOT held training in Olympia and Moses Lake to assist transit agencies with preparing their Transit Asset Management Plans. Transit agency maintenance and general managers representing 25 of Washington's 28 transit systems participated. The training provided guidance on how to prepare an asset management plan and covered the required plan elements.



The program is based upon the 2003 adoption of RCW 81.112.086 designed to guide the maintenance and preservation of transportation assets in Washington State. As a condition of receiving state funding, transit agencies must submit asset management plans for certification by the Transportation Commission. Each plan must include an inventory of all transportation system assets and a preservation plan based on lowest life cycle cost methodologies. The transit asset management plans are due to WSDOT May 15, 2005 for certification by the Transportation Commission in June. For more information on Asset Management Plans, visit [http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/asset\\_mgmt\\_plan/default.cfm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/asset_mgmt_plan/default.cfm)

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## **Sound Transit/WSDOT Project Updates**

### **Expert Review Panel for Sound Transit 2**

An independent Expert Review Panel, appointed to provide review of Sound Transit's Phase 2 Planning for the Regional Transit Long-Range Plan, will meet on April 4 and 5 to discuss the options under study for extending high-capacity transit in the region. The panel's role is to pose and assess critical questions, review key methodologies and assumptions in the Sound Transit 2 Plan, and ensure that the assumptions are appropriate and reasonable. The panel's technical review of the Sound Transit 2 Plan is necessary to guarantee that Sound Transit's Board can make appropriate decisions for Sound Transit 2 investments in the region's high-capacity transportation system.

The eight-member panel was appointed in November 2004 by former Governor Gary Locke, Legislative Transportation Committee Chairman Ed Murray, and Secretary of Transportation Doug MacDonald. The panel members were selected from across the country to provide expertise spanning key technical areas. These include: project cost estimating, capital finance plan review,

ridership forecasting, modal analysis, legal and political architecture of Sound Transit's legislative charter, environmental impact statement preparation, local design and constructability, and transit operations and maintenance.

#### Interstate 5/317<sup>th</sup> Street Direct Access Project

Crews are making progress with improvements to the notoriously rough I-5 pavement in Federal Way. Construction started on the Interstate 5/317<sup>th</sup> Street direct access project in mid 2004 and the project is moving along on schedule and on budget. Crews set girders for the bridge in March and for the past two weeks have been performing pavement rehabilitation work. WSDOT expects the direct access ramp to open to traffic in fall 2005 and is providing weekly project updates through the project area on Highway Advisory Radio Station 1520.



#### Totem Lake Freeway Station

The Totem Lake Freeway Station is a large direct access project at 128<sup>th</sup> street and I-405. Construction will begin June 2005 and the project will be open to traffic by end of 2007. The project will improve travel across the freeway as well as provide transit and HOV users direct access to/from I-405.



Artist Rendering of Totem Lake Project

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### **Washington Schools on Trains**



This spring, Washington *Schools on Trains* begins its seventh year on Amtrak *Cascades*. Students, teachers and chaperones can travel aboard Amtrak *Cascades* anywhere between Portland, Oregon and Bellingham, Washington for only \$7 a person, round trip or one way. Last year, 7619 students, teachers, and chaperones from 158 public and private schools, home school associations, and community youth organizations participated in the *Schools on Trains* program. Since the first school group signed up for the program in 1998, the number of participants has steadily grown from 1472 participants to 7619, a 418 percent increase over six years.

*Schools on Trains*, now a model program for other states, exposes teachers and students to rail transportation in real-time and provides a unique backdrop to learning about Washington in a fun and meaningful way.

### **Amtrak Cascades Announces Record Ridership in 2004**

Amtrak *Cascades* announced record ridership of over 603,000 passengers during 2004—a 2.3 percent increase compared to last year. This is the tenth consecutive year of increased ridership aboard Amtrak *Cascades*.

The overall increase in Amtrak *Cascades* ridership is largely attributable to strong ridership from May through August. The Amtrak *Cascades* continues to rank near the top of Amtrak's 42-route national system for customer satisfaction.



### **Quincy Transload Facility Project Completed**

Construction was completed on the Quincy Transload Facility in March. The project created a 400-acre staging area for trains and trucks, where containers can be loaded on and off railcars. The facility includes double-stack train staging tracks, paving, fencing, lighting, and security. It will create jobs in Quincy such as crane lift operators, hostlers (workers who move the containers around the yard), and gate clerks, as well as opportunities for local truckers to haul trailers and containers from packinghouses to the transload facility. WSDOT contributed up to \$2 million in freight rail assistance funding (2003 legislative package) towards this project. The state's funds were matched with a \$3.8 million federal grant from the United States Department of Agriculture in addition to the funds already spent by the Port of Quincy.

This project improves rail access to the Port of Quincy, enabling the efficient transloading of steamship and domestic containers from road to rail and vice versa. The facility will reduce shipping costs for Columbia Basin produce shippers. It may also help to reduce congestion at the Ports of Seattle and Tacoma by moving truck pickups and deliveries out to the agricultural areas of central Washington. Rail transport also reduces highway congestion over Snoqualmie Pass, into the Seattle/Tacoma area.

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### **Vanpool Investment Program Shows Results**



In 2003 the Washington State Legislature approved \$4 million for the biennium to expand vanpooling throughout the state. In the first year, transit agencies purchased 65 vans and they plan to purchase at least 115 vans in 2005. The state's increased capital investment in vanpooling is supported by an innovative new van brokerage system, financial incentives to build ridership, and a public awareness campaign. Between January and December 2004, the number of vanpools on the road statewide increased by 7 percent to a new high of 1,744 vans.

### **CTR Annual Surveys Are Underway**

Surveying is underway among the more than 700 employers and over 1,000 worksites participating in the Commute Trip Reduction Program (CTR). CTR worksites must conduct surveys in alternate years, asking all of their employees to respond to a series of questions about their commute choices. WSDOT provides survey processing and analysis at no charge to employers. Since the first survey in 1993, the program has

accumulated program data that the department makes available to counties and jurisdictions interested in impacts on congestion and the environment.

### **April Campaigns Will Encourage People to Try Commute Options**

WSDOT is promoting the use of commute options by encouraging people to try an alternate to driving alone to work: carpooling, vanpooling, riding a bus, walking, cycling, working from home or compressing work hours. From April 4 through 15, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* is donating four half-page ads supporting the program. In addition, WSDOT partnered with McDonald's restaurants for breakfast promotions in the Seattle and Spokane markets.

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### **Upcoming Events:**

#### **Call for Conference Workshops**

Propose conference topics or speakers for the 2005 Public Transportation Conference

**Due April 20, 2005**

Call (360) 705-7909 for more information

[www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/conference](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/conference)

**Expert Review Panel Meeting, Sound Transit Phase 2**

April 4 and 5, 2005

8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m.

Harbor Steps Conference Center, 1301 First Avenue, Level A  
Seattle,

For more information, contact John Howell, Panel Administrator, 206-223-7660

**Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation Meetings**

April 1, June 3, August 5, October 7, and December 2

9:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

WSDOT's Headquarters Building, Commission Boardroom  
Olympia

[www.wsdot.wa.gov/acct/acct\\_meetings.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/acct/acct_meetings.htm)

**29<sup>th</sup> Annual Washington State Public Transportation Conference**

August 22-24, 2005

Double Tree Hotel Seattle Airport

SeaTac

[www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/conference](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/conference)T

For more information or questions regarding articles in the newsletter, please contact Tonia Buell,  
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